The Library Reference Collection:

What Kinds of Materials will you find in the Reference Collection?
What are Reference Sources

What are some characteristics of Reference Sources?
What are Reference Sources?

Some Characteristics of Reference Materials:

- Designed to be consulted rather than read beginning to end
  - Usually only a portion of the book is needed.
- Provide facts and figures in an easy-to-find format
- Provide concise information to frequently asked questions
- Contain summary or detailed information for particular subject areas
- Serve as guides to information
- Do not circulate; remain in the library for access to all.
Kinds of Reference Materials

- **General reference materials:**
  - Include information on a variety of subjects
  - Encyclopedias, dictionaries, almanacs, yearbooks, etc.

- **Subject oriented reference materials:**
  - Focus on a specific subject or discipline
  - Subject encyclopedias, subject dictionaries, atlases, handbooks, etc.

- **Guides to other information sources** (indirect)

- **Facts or figures** for information needs
Direct/Indirect Sources p. 38-39

**Direct Sources**
- (contains the information)
  - Almanacs
  - Atlases
  - Biographical dictionaries
  - Dictionaries
  - Encyclopedias
  - Gazetteers
  - Guidebooks
  - Handbooks/Manuals
  - Yearbooks

**Indirect Sources**
- (leads to other information sources)
  - Indexes (such as the Periodical Indexes we used in class)
  - Abstracts (summaries)
  - Bibliographies
  - Concordances
Reference Resources

- Ready Reference Collections
  - Frequently used items may be kept at or nearby the Reference Desk

- The scope and coverage varies among reference sources
  - Some reference resources may include similar information that overlap or compliment each other.

- Currency and timeliness is important
- Librarians evaluate and “select” reference titles.
Selecting Reference Resources

- Librarians evaluate items before they are added to the library’s collection.
- Each researcher must examine the available resources and evaluate the contents for their particular research needs.
- Your “information needs” must be identified and then matched with the appropriate information source as part of the search strategy. (see Summary Resource Chart)
- Ask for help from your instructor and a librarian!
Consideration for Choosing the Reference Materials

Factors to consider in determining the type of resources to use:

- **Focus**
- **Time Factor:** historical or current
- **Treatment:** popular or scholarly
- **Format:** print or electronic
- **Type of Source:** primary or secondary
Focus

- Determine the subject area or perspectives: Humanities, Social Science, Science, technical, pictorial, statistical, etc.

- Scope of coverage:
  - broad overview,
  - brief summary,
  - narrow aspect,
  - Detailed/complete

- Pro or Con? Supporting or opposing viewpoint
Time Factor

- Historical, current or a combination for comparison
- Timeline of publication:
  - Daily – most current
  - Weekly – can add perspective
  - Monthly – more perspective
  - Quarterly
  - Annually
Treatment

- Popular: intended for widespread readership; often written by journalists or staff writers; contains illustrations, advertisements, anecdotal accounts; deals with current events and issues.

- Scholarly: written for and by scholars and experts; describing results of research experiments and studies; usually lengthy; sources are documented.

- Trade: written for and by professionals in an industry (e.g. advertising, automotive, media).
What type of Information Do You Need?

- General or background information
- Specific Facts
- Geographical Facts
- Biographical Facts
- Statistical Charts/Information

Primary: *ORIGINAL, UNINTERPRETED* source of information such as eyewitness accounts (e.g.: diaries, interviews, experiments, raw statistics, etc.)

Secondary: secondhand—reports after the fact or removed from the event; INTERPRET, ANALYZE, SUMMARIZE (e.g.: a commentary based on first hand accounts or/and encyclopedia article.)
Evaluating Reference Sources

- Accuracy of Information
- Authoritativeness
- Completeness
- Currency / Timeliness
- Objectivity / Bias / Balanced Opinion
- Publisher
- Documentation: bibliography or notes
- Illustrations (pictures, maps, charts, tables, etc.)
- Ease of use
Consult pages 35-40 for information on Reference Sources. The chart on pages 37-38 are especially helpful.
Week 2 – Homework advice

For this week’s assignment (Week 2 = pages 76-85) you have already done page 81 “Examining Reference Books” in class and turned it in at the end of class. If needed, another copy of p.76 is handed out in class.

**READ THE INSTRUCTIONS ON THE ASSIGNMENTS carefully. They tell you exactly how to do the steps successfully.**

Use the goldenrod handout “Student Guide to Preparing an MLA Style List of Works Cited” for guidance and samples on how to do MLA entries. It will show you how to deal with multiple authors and gives examples showing how you put in the Medium of Publication. Handout is also available online at: [http://www.pasadena.edu/library/documents/mlaguideW10rev2CURRENT.pdf](http://www.pasadena.edu/library/documents/mlaguideW10rev2CURRENT.pdf)

- p.78 - Step 2c – make sure that you list SUBJECT HEADINGS (i.e. the listed SUBJECTS: on the records for the individual books)
- p.78 - Step 3 – Search the Subject Headings that you found in Step 2c by clicking on the Subject tab and then list the books (on p. 79) that you find under those subject headings.
- p.80 - Step 4 – using the call numbers for the books listed on p. 79 go to the shelf and browse for another book related to your topic.
- p.80 - Step 5 – The MLA citations should be for the books you listed on p.79, 80. Remember to include the “medium of publication” (i.e. Print) and remember to capitalize all the main words of the title.
- p.82 – Part 1 – Use *World Book Encyclopedia* (Print!) and write a citation for an article found in *World Book!*
- p.82-3 – Part 2 – Browse for **REFERENCE** sources on the **2nd floor** for the 3 Subject Reference Books you will list on p.83-84.
- If you can’t find a book on your specific topic look for a broader topic. For example if I can’t find a whole REFERENCE book on Japanese Ceramics, then I would look for a REFERENCE book on Art that might include information on Ceramics, or on Japanese Art.
- P.84-85- Part 3- USING REFERENCE DATABASES – section A. Use only the Gale Virtual Reference Library. For section B. Use one of the 4 databases listed.